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A
S E R M O N

PREACHED IN THE

PARISH CHURCH of HACKNEY,

ON

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 1794;

THE DAY APPOINTED FOR A

GENERAL FAST:

BY THE REV. J. SYMONS, B. D. K

PUBLISHED AT THE REQUEST OF THE CONGREGATION.

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S E R M O N

PARRISH CHURCH



TRIDAY

GENERAL

BY THE REV. J. H. ...

PRINTED AT THE ...

LONDON

Printed for T. and A. ...

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TO THE
CONGREGATION WHO WERE HIS HEARERS,

THIS SERMON,

PRINTED AT THEIR REQUEST,

IS

WITH A GRATEFUL REMEMBRANCE OF
THE ATTENTION WITH WHICH IT
WAS HEARD,

AND

A FULL SENSE OF THEIR ATTACHMENT
TO THE CAUSE IT WAS MEANT TO
SERVE, MANIFESTED BY THEIR
NUMEROUS ATTENDANCE
ON THIS DAY

AND

A CORRESPONDING EXPRESSION OF THEIR
PRINCIPLES ON ALL OCCASIONS,

DEDICATED BY

THEIR FAITHFUL FRIEND AND PASTOR

J. SYMONS.

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THEIR PATRONS OF FRIEND AND PASTOR

1. 27 MON

ROMANS XI. 22.

*Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God :
on them which fell, severity ; but towards thee,
goodness, if thou continue in his goodness : other-
wise thou also shalt be cut off.*

IN the afflictions that befall us, it is not always that we can trace the evil to its cause, and see the connexion between the sin and its punishment. The intermediate links which unite the consequence with its remote cause are sometimes so far out of our sight that we are only able to discern the immediate causes that produce it : and the dispensations of providence are so difficult and mysterious that we are forced to resolve them into the unsearchable wisdom of him who seeth not as we

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see ; who commandeth the wole extent of causes and effects through all the variety of circumstances into which they branch, and the utmost length of time to which they extend ; and who has wise and good ends to be accomplished by every event that comes to pass. But in the calamities that have been brought upon the world at this time, by the instrumentality of that people with whom they originated, the evils and their causes are so immediately connected, and the divine judgments are written in characters so legible, that we are at no loss to discern the justice of that severity which they suffer as the consequence of a conduct unusually enormous : and we gather from it both in itself, and its effects so far as we are sharers in them, strong lessons of caution that may be very necessary to restrain us from following their example. We have great reason to be thankful that we are not more deeply involved in the consequences than we are. We see at once *the goodness and severity of God : on them severity ; but towards us goodness, if we continue in his goodness ; otherwise we also shall be cut off.*

In considering the circumstances that are the occasion of our assembling together on this day, and the

the uses to be made of it, it will be proper to trace the consequences to their causes, that we may see whence these evils have arisen—How much reason we have to be thankful that we are only so far sharers in them—and how incumbent it is on us to avoid those causes if we would escape the punishment which must else be ours in its full extent.

It had long been observed by those who were acquainted with the manners of France (and too many had imported from thence a like levity of sentiment) that in the higher circles of life, Religion was sunk into great contempt: that it was become fashionable to disavow their belief in revelation, and to substitute philosophy in its stead. From superstition they had, naturally enough, gone to the other extreme, and, not content with rejecting the adventitious garb which in that and other catholic countries disfigured the pure and genuine faith of Christ, they had rejected the faith itself, and from idolaters had become avowed deists. Its priests, its ordinances, the Saviour it revealed, the promises of eternal life, and the denunciations of everlasting punishment which it proclaimed, were held in derision. To reject the faith of the vulgar

gar—To deny the doctrines of the gospel, as mysteries too gross for these enlightened times: To laugh at the ministers and the ordinances of religion, was deemed necessary to constitute a philosopher.

Their principles so loose and licentious, their morality of course was not very rigid or refined. Principles formed to give the freest scope to indulgence, and leave the fewest restraints upon their passions, were not likely to produce severe moralists, or give much countenance to the practice of virtue in those below them. A levity of conversation and manners, debauched sentiments and criminal intercourse in the marriage state, luxury in all its forms, were examples which could not fail to lessen the veneration for religion in the lower orders; and, in proportion to their intercourse and opportunities, corrupt their manners.

Still they felt the necessity of retaining the ordinances of religion to be a check and restraint upon these. To them therefore they left their priests, their sacraments, their sabbaths. They knew that philosophy was not sufficient for them whatever it might be for themselves. The strong
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and despotic arm of government might awe them into submission, but the sanctions of religion were wanting to controul those passions which human authority alone was not sufficient to restrain.

While their conceit and scepticism were confined to their own sphere, they philosophized without immediate danger to themselves or to the safety of the state. The consequences to themselves were at a distance, denied by the principles of their own infidelity, and not to be experienced till that day which, whether they derided or believed, would come at last; and the consequences to the community, excepting so far as the morals of the people were affected and their principles loosened and prepared for what would follow, would not be felt till the measure of their sins should be filled up, and the full grown size of national depravity should call for some heavy judgment, and become the fit means to hasten and inflict it. But when the same conceit and fondness for novelty and experiment extended to regenerate and form anew the constitution of society, to pull down every thing that had the appearance of authority, and there was neither law nor religion left to restrain the hand of violence, and

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curb the operation of those principles which had before weakened the ties of morality, but were now become universal, the consequence was what might be expected: the effect of their principles was too fatally experienced and their folly exposed. They carried with them their own refutation and their own punishment. It was now seen, by most expensive experiment, whether the world was become so enlightened as not to need the light of heaven to direct them: so virtuous as not to want the restraint of divine or human laws to curb their freedom: so humanized as not again to trample upon the rights and spill the blood of man. It was demonstrated that men still were men; and, left to themselves, without religion, without government, without laws grounded upon experience and adapted to man as he is, would be as wicked and depraved, as ferocious and as savage as they ever were. An awful spectacle was now exhibited for the whole world to see, and for all succeeding generations to learn, what havock may be made among the finest works of human policy, and what destruction among mankind, by the puerile projects of men professing themselves wise; who, throwing away all the accumulated wisdom of ages, and despising that wisdom which

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is from above, shall think themselves competent to restrain and rule, without religion or laws, those passions which the wisest regulations of human wisdom and the sanctions of divine law are but sufficient to controul.

To mock them with their own conceits—To shew them the vanity of their projects and schemes, God was pleased to leave them to themselves, to become the instruments of their own ruin, and the scourge of those nations around them who, infected by their example, or in danger of being so, might need the timely correction of his hand to punish or restrain them.

I need not shock your feelings with the relation of the horrid crimes and cruelties that have been deliberately committed, gloried in, and made the subject of their savage sport. The feelings of all who hear me have again and again revolted from the perusal of them: Human nature sickens at the recital, and blushes that they are men.

O good God! is it possible that the creatures of thine hand can so debase their nature and belie the origin from whence they spring! Is it possible that man can riot in the blood of man, and exult

ult in the miseries and mischiefs he occasions !
 Yes; when they deny their God, and make a mock
 of sin, every thing is possible ; every enormity is to
 be expected. Forfaken by him, they become
 worse than brutes. Hardened by crimes, they go
 on to invent new modes of cruelty and guilt to
 astonish and affright the world; and their only
 sorrow is, that human depravity can go no farther.

Such are the causes which have laid waste the
 neighbouring kingdom, which have overturned
 its government, murdered its King, massacred or
 driven into banishment its nobility, its clergy, its
 friends of every description;—despoiled the rich
 of their property, the poor of their support. Re-
 ligion was first slighted and despised in the higher
 circles: The effect extended from them to the
 lower orders of society: and when it was become
 sufficiently general to yield to the designs of their
 unprincipled leaders, and readily give up the little
 remains of religion and the whole system of hu-
 man policy, there was nothing to stop the progress
 of their crimes.

Had they retained their religion they would
 still have been humane: they would not have
 suffered themselves to become in the hands of their
 leaders

leaders the instruments of cruelty and oppression: Whatever they might have wished to reform in the government of their country, their measures would have been guided by justice, mercy and peace. Conscience, the fear of God, the principles and duties of religion, would have directed them to honour their King, to respect the rights of property, to do justice, to love order, to allow that liberty to others which they claimed themselves, and to shudder at the thought of embruing their hands in the blood of those whose only crime was that of thinking differently from themselves.

We have traced the causes of the *severity* of their sufferings: let us consider the *goodness* of God towards ourselves.

Had this devoted people confined their projects and crimes within their own bounds, we had had only the painful detail of their sufferings to read, and the tear of sympathy to drop for the unhappy subjects of so much misery and delusion. But not content with desolating their own country, and destroying all religion and order there, their wicked imaginations led them to form schemes and designs to overturn all other governments, and involve other countries in their guilt and ruin.

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Their principles and their example were already too dangerous and too likely to affect the principles and the peace of other countries: There were already too many disposed to take advantage of the opportunity to vent their own discontent, and to rejoice in the success of their neighbours, in the hope of seeing its effects extended to themselves. They wanted not invitation to rebel against their rulers. They were already active and busy, and only waited for a favourable moment to unite their strength and make their demands in a tone not to be refused. The same conceit of a more enlightened philosophy, of regenerating the ancient systems of religion and government; the same licentious spirit had prepared them for scenes which they expected with a confidence proportioned to the ravages that were made by their forerunners in Reform. The period and the prospects to which they had long been looking, but could not have flattered themselves to be so near, seemed now at hand.

In such circumstances, the example of a country so near, and so likely to avail themselves one day or other of the opportunity of fomenting divisions and discontents among us, was sufficient cause

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of alarm, without erecting the standard of revolt, and inviting all nations to throw off the yoke of government and wage war against their rulers.

This was an authoritative avowal of that which considerate and attentive observers of the events that were passing around them had foreseen and feared. This was a demonstration of that which till then had no proof but the apprehensions and fears of those who, though they formed their opinion from circumstances that were too suspicious, were supposed by others to be more than necessarily fearful of a danger that seemed at too great a distance to reach or affect us.

The open avowal of principles that were one day to overturn our government, to unhinge all order, to break the ties of society, to confound property and condition, and deluge the land with blood, alarmed and roused every friend to Religion, Order and Peace. The same dangerous doctrines industriously spread among the lower orders of the people to lessen their veneration for government, to loosen the ties of subordination, and tempt them to revolt, had well nigh accomplished all that our enemies foreign or domestic could desire.

I tremble to look back to the precipice on which we stood. All society seemed to be breaking up. The King on his throne, the princes, the nobles, the clergy, the man of property, all saw their rights, their privileges, their possessions at stake. Each looked forward with fear, and contemplated in silence an event that might shortly come to pass. The husband and the father beheld the exiled foreigner as he passed with sympathy and concern, as a case that might shortly be his own. The feelings of compassion, which the recital of every new scene of carnage and cruelty abroad excited in our bosoms, were mingled with feelings of dread lest the same scenes of carnage and desolation should reach us here.

You have not, my Brethren, so soon forgotten these things, that I should need to refresh your remembrance with circumstances so recent and alarming. You must feel at this moment the *goodness* of God towards us, who though we are unfortunately involved in one part of the consequences of their crimes, yet hath preserved us from the heaviest part of the judgments that have fallen upon these times. Happily our coun-

country has escaped the devastations and miseries of civil commotion and not been made the seat of war. Happily we were not so far gone in wickedness or so generally corrupt as to be ripe for such scenes. However a part of the people of this country might be so depraved as to be consenting unto such enormities, to have looked with satisfaction upon them, and perhaps to have contributed by their approbation to bring us into our present situation, with respect to the people at large, we had the most decided proofs that they abominate the principle and deprecate the consequence. There was yet religion, prudence and humanity to resist the mischiefs that were imminent. God in mercy to us awaked us to see our danger, and bestowed an abundant blessing on the means employed to avert it.

But though under the blessing of a watchful Providence this great salvation hath been effected in our internal circumstances, will he continue to watch over us for our protection and success against the foreign enemy, with whom we are still at issue, if we prove unworthy of his mercies?" "Behold the *goodness* and *severity* of God: on them which fell, *severity*; but to
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“wards thee goodness, *if thou continue in his*
 “goodness; otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.”

This is our next consideration, to which both the text and the occasion lead—

How we are to avert the greater evils which are to be expected, if our conduct shall be such as to call for like *severity* upon us.

What then is our conduct, and what does it become us to do, *to continue in his goodness?*

Without indulging a vanity which would at any time be unbecoming, but on a day like this, when we are assembled to bewail our sins, would defeat the very end we have in view, it may be a subject of some satisfaction, that however we may be deficient in goodness, we are yet many degrees short of that wickedness which hath brought upon the world the calamities that it suffers: for had we been Atheists and Blasphemers; had we been Robbers and Murderers; had our principles been loose and licentious, and our morals generally depraved; had there been no sense of religion to restrain us from the same enormities, we should have

received them as friends, and hailed them as the Saviours of our country.

In the later instances of their crimes and cruelty, it is not inconsistent with the humiliation which becomes ourselves, or the charity with which it becomes us to speak of others, to plead in our defence that we have no such sins to lay to our charge.

Happily for our country, the national character, though not such as to be a subject of pride, forms in many respects no unfavourable contrast to theirs.

The state of public worship, in the middle ranks of life at least, shews that religion is not generally forgotten or despised. Though careful beyond the due degree of concern for the body, and, more than we should be, attached to the present world, the concerns of the next it is plain do occupy a share in our affections and cares.

In integrity and liberality we stand highly distinguished. Among individuals, numbers will
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be found whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, though not blameless, with no small praise. Well were it if their numbers were greater and their lives still more free from sin; greater then would be our confidence in the protection of God, and greater our own strength, not weakened by vices which always operate to diminish the national strength. But let us not glory. It is the language of prudence as well as revelation, "*Be not high minded, but fear.*"

Though our land is not defiled with blood, the altars of the Lord not broken down, nor the house of God forsaken, yet is the state of religion such as on this day, when we review the moral character of our country, can be a subject of satisfaction and confidence in the protection and favour of God?

The house of God is not forsaken; but is it frequented by those to whom the inferior stations look up for example, and whose laws, more binding than those of senates, lead the manners of the world?

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Is not religion in the higher circles (perhaps transplanted from the same soil) what it had been for some time in the higher circles in France, and what should be a serious lesson to our own nobility, not yet banished, but in their own conduct grossly neglected and despised; too much considered, as it was by them, to be the concern of the lower orders, who want those instructions and restraints which they can do without? Dearly have the one paid for their contempt; and let the other be warned by the sad example of those of their own rank, whose contempt of religion, at first perhaps not more than neglect, hath involved them in peculiar ruin.

Smaller than they are aware is the distance between their present neglect and the total dereliction of all religious principle. Though it be not that yet, soon perhaps it will be; for vice is in its nature progressive: neglect brings on contempt, and in a little while that which is now not more than the line of demarkation between negative good and positive evil will be decidedly on the side of the latter. They too will at length come to think they can do without religion. From despising they will go on to deride it;

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to live as if there were no God in the world; and at last to deny that there is one. Time was when they, who are now so severely suffering the consequence of their forsaking God, had not gone farther than these now go. Religion was not openly insulted nor its ordinances utterly despised. It was only left for the lower orders of the people, as more peculiarly needful for them.

Oh that I could reach the ears of those in higher life, and convince them of how much consequence in every point of view religion is! that not only their eternal salvation, which, if they are at all to be distinguished from professed unbelievers, they must know to be of infinite concern; but that all which they possess in life, their rank, their fortune, their rights, their liberties, their very lives, which though only temporary concerns may perhaps operate more powerfully upon them than any consequences that have respect to their future condition, all depend upon this. Take away this, or lessen the influence and authority of this, and the whole fabrick of human policy will soon be overthrown. Not only the blessing and protection
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of Heaven, which ought with men professing to believe in God to be a primary consideration, cannot be expected; but the very neglect itself brings on its own punishment. It operates naturally to diminish the respect for religion in their own families and connexions. Their children, their servants, their dependants, will not reverence that which their fathers, their masters, their superiors despise. They will, however it may be recommended as proper for them, conclude that sentiments are best learnt from practice, and that which is not needful for one can be of no great consequence to the other: or, without any deduction, the example will speak for itself, and gradually weaken their principles and corrupt their manners: and when the general character is depraved they will not be kept within the bounds of safety and subordination by the wisest counsels and the most salutary provisions of human laws.

So long as the machine is going the effects of loosened principles may not be perceived; but whenever the wheels of government are clogged or impeded by external circumstances out of the power of

human penetration to foresee, or the wisest measures within the compass of man to devise, the want of religious principle to restrain the unruly wills and disorderly passions of the multitude will be most seriously felt. Surely I need not remind them, when it comes to this, how insufficient all external means must be to enforce obedience, and keep together the disjointed parts of the social frame. When once the principles of duty and the ties of conscience are loosened, the period is not far distant when the smothered flame will break out, and the accumulated load of national depravity will overwhelm us as it has our neighbours.

It is the mind that must be disciplined and formed to obedience; and it is in the calm moments of peace and security that it must be done. It is then that the multitude must be taught to know and fear God. It is too late when they become tumultuous and disorderly to reason or to instruct.

Religion, however strong its arguments or forcible its eloquence, will not be heard. Its voice will be smothered by the loud clamours of popular fury. Its oracles will be trampled under foot.

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Its teachers will be scorned and banished. Force only can supply the place of conviction and duty ; but what can force avail when the general mass is corrupted, and the *few* become the victims to the *many* ? Should force succeed, it is then not the government that we have been accustomed to venerate. It becomes, and we are ourselves the instruments to make it so, a despotic government, with which only such obedience can accord.

I wish, without speaking so plain, I could convince them how much their own security depends upon the prevalence of good principles in all ranks, to counteract the mischievous and licentious spirit that is gone forth into the world, and which nothing but the fear of God and a strong sense of moral duty can possibly restrain. Then would they know how to prize religion. Then would not its ordinances be slighted, its sabbaths profaned. Other occupations than those of secular concern, of business or amusement, of cards or concerts, though under the name of * *Sacred music*,

[* "There is an evil newly crept into polished society, and it comes under a mask so specious that they are chiefly good
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music, would fill up the day consecrated to God's service : and something more than a nominal profession, or even a formal attendance upon his worship, would distinguish them as members of a christian church. Their example would add weight to the instructions of its teachers, and those in the lower stations of life would be strengthened and incited by the pattern of the highest,

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fort of people who are allured by it; I mean *Sunday Concerts*. Many who would be startled at a prophane or even an idle amusement think that the name of *sacred music* sanctifies the diversion. But if those who live in ease and affluence do not make these petty renunciations of their own ways and their own pleasure, what criterion have we by which to judge of their sincerity?

"I know with what indignant scorn this remark will by many be received: that much will be advanced in favour of the sanctity of this amusement. I shall be told that the words are many of them extracted from the bible, and that the composition is the divine Handel's. But were the angel Gabriel the poet, the archangel Michael the composer, and the song of the Lamb the subject, it would not abrogate that statute of the most high. "Thou shalt keep holy the sabbath day, and thy servant and thy cattle shall do no manner of work." I am persuaded that the hallelujahs of heaven would make no moral music to the ear of a conscientious person while he reflected that multitudes of servants are waiting in the streets exposed to every temptation; engaged perhaps in prophane swearing and idle if not dissolute conversation; and the very cattle are deprived of that rest which the tender mercy of God was graciously pleased by an astonishing condescension to include in the commandment."

Thoughts on the Manners of the Great p. 35. This little production of an elegant female pen contains more on the same and subjects connected with it, that deserves to be again read, and not forgotten by those in the higher circles.

In all ranks and stations there is no doubt much room for amendment. Though the moral state of our country may not be such as, when compared with other times or the state of other countries, to be a ground for national despair, yet will there always be, and there now is, too much to be the subject of deep humiliation and concern.

Looking to our own sphere of life and into our own hearts, as it becomes us on this day to do, can we say that religion has that place in our affections and that influence upon our practice that it ought? Are we deserving of no correction, or at least in want of no seasonable severity to check us from growing worse? Is our faith pure, our zeal equal to the importance of its object, our conversation such "as becometh the gospel of Christ?" Is there not something of this same philosophy, something like natural Religion creeping in among us, the conceit of wisdom that needs not revelation to direct it, of natural powers that stand not in need of divine grace to strengthen and assist them?

Vices are at all times too prevalent, but are there not some that are predominant and fast increasing

creasing? Among those which are the characteristic vices of the times, luxury, extravagance, and self-destruction the last resource of those who have nothing to sustain them in the hour of adversity and need, are increased to an extent that strongly marks the decline of religious principle.

Among the lower orders of the people, already affected by the example of their superiors, and not brought hither by those who have influence to persuade them to partake of better counsels and example, is there not a spirit of discontent, however excited, that reluctantly submits to the controul of power or to the condition and the duties which providence hath allotted to them? Are they not profligate and abandoned, for want of those principles which would have been received and strengthened by a constant attendance on the ordinances of their God?

7 JUL 66
I will not do so much injustice to this numerous and valuable part of the community, as to involve them in indiscriminate reproach.

their praise I own it, that numbers of the poor (much short it must be lamented of what there should be) are among the constant attendants

ants here, and whose moral behaviour is as free from reproach as any other class of men. Yet is it not, I must with sorrow add, to them that we look for that general appearance of piety and moral purity that can be the subject of satisfaction and dependance on a day like this.

From a full conviction that religion is our security; that to be virtuous is the way to secure the favour and protection of heaven; and that we are not already what a people whose hope is in the Lord their God should be, we have recourse in the day of visitation to the means which this solemnity prescribes, to correct our prevailing sins, and fit us to ask with confidence the assistance of him "from whom cometh our help, and from whom alone it can come."

The appearance of this great congregation affords a pleasing proof that you know from whom your help cometh; and the humiliation which you have this day shewn by those external expressions of sorrow and amendment which become our situation, I will not doubt but your hearts have felt, and will continue to feel throughout the day. But it is not,

as you will readily allow, this day's humiliation, how sincere soever it be, that will be the recommendation that we need to God, or exempt us from the severity which our sins must expect.

Our future conduct must be a continuation of the amendment that we now begin. We must "*continue in his goodness, otherwise we also shall be cut off.*"

If we continue in his goodness, then may we rely on his protection, and our virtues will be the means to effect our safety: happier far than the most brilliant successes obtained at the expence of blood, if it shall be "by turning the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just;" by disposing our enemies to seek that God whom they have forsaken, to rebuild his temple, to restore his altars, to seek the peace of the city wherein they dwell, "*for in the peace thereof we shall have peace.*" *Jerem xxix. 7.*

These are the subjects of our prayer. We delight not in the blood of our enemies. We ask not their destruction but their conversion. We call not for fire from heaven to destroy them.

them. * While we unite in prayer and supplication "for the pardon of our sins, and for deliverance from the evils of war, in the spirit of christian charity we add our humble intercession for the repentance and conversion of men who, having cast off their faith in the living God and following the vain imaginations of reprobate minds, have plunged themselves into those horrible crimes and impieties which astonish the christian world." We pray "that they may see and consider with detestation and terror the ravages of their cruelty amongst their fellow creatures: that they may be struck with remorse and compunction, before they fill up the measure of their iniquities†." Subjects these in which every pious and feeling heart must readily unite whatever be his sentiments of the cause or circumstances of our present situation. Peace must be our common wish; and that peace we pray for.

It is one part of this day's design to cultivate those dispositions which make for peace—

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* To shew "what manner of spirit we are of," the three first verses of the 94th Psalm were omitted in the service of the day: so perfectly free were our devotions from a spirit of revenge.

† Form of Prayer for the Day,

that *Piety* which "feareth God and keepeth his commandments"—that *Justice* which "doeth violence to no man"—that *Charity* which "suffereth long and is kind"—that *Contentment* which "envieth not"—that *Patience* which "beareth all things"—that *Humility* which "is not puffed up"—that *Forgiveness* which "returneth not evil for evil, but repayeth evil with good." While we cultivate such dispositions we shall not obstruct the return of peace, or refuse the blessings which it brings: much less shall we consent to kindle the flames of civil commotion, or become the instruments in the hands of evil-minded men to disturb the public peace. But if we forsake the Lord our God, and become a disobedient and gainsaying people, we shall, though we talk of peace, do that which tends to bring on war. Our sins will call for divine correction, and be the means in the hand of Providence to effect it.

The tremendous example that we see before us, speaks more than volumes of persuasion to warn us of our danger. We need not look to "Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities about them that are set forth for an example." We have
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the warning at hand, written in characters of blood; in the blood of thousands who have paid the price of their incredulity with their lives—an awful warning to all the nations of the earth, never to make light of Religion.

Say not, such is our constitution or condition that there is no fear that it will come to this. But a few years back who would have believed the things which he since hath seen? "A work" hath been worked in our days that we should "in no wise have believed though a man had declared it unto us." You have seen with your own eyes that there is no change or event so strange but that it may come to pass. When the national character is gone: when vice and impiety prevail: when we set up our own wisdom in opposition to that wisdom which is from above, and leave the good old paths, which have conducted the generations of old in peace and safety through the present world to that kingdom of peace and love to which we look beyond it, every thing is to be feared. Interested and ambitious men will take advantage of the opportunity it affords to effect their schemes. They know how to discern the times and seasons. They know that a people who
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have not the Lord for their God have no hope in his protection. They know that a people whose sins have separated between God and them are fit instruments for their purpose. They know that such ends cannot be accomplished but by agents trained in the schools of vice, and prepared for crimes which the checks of conscience would restrain.

Do not, I pray you, be too secure. What is now the situation of our enemies may from the same causes become our own. If you expect the multitude to escape the infectious example of infidelity profaneness and disorder that is gone forth into the world:—If you expect them to have strength to resist such licentious opinions and excessive abominations—If you expect that they shall be proof against the flattering temptations that are set before them to induce them to take part with the leaders of discontent—If you expect them to remain firm and uncorrupted amidst the many arts that are employed to shake their faith in God and corrupt their integrity to men, their minds must be fortified by religion: “Their feet must be shod
“with the preparation of the gospel of peace.”

When

When rebellion against their rulers is taught them as a duty—when religion and the laws that hold society together are despised—when property is held forth to them as their prey; and they are taught to consider the fruits of industry as so much withheld from themselves, it requires more than ever the interposition of a divine and authoritative sanction to enforce subjection to their rulers, obedience to the laws, respect to property, subordination in their respective stations, fidelity to their employers, truth love and justice to all mankind.

Unless religion shall have taught them this, it will be difficult to interpose a sufficient bar to stop the progress of discontent, to reconcile them to their duties and stations, and preserve that order on which the security and happiness of life depend.

Consider then, once more I beseech you, consider of how much consequence to yourselves as well as to your country it is, that you become the people that this day is intended to make you. Trifle not with yourselves and your happiness here and for ever. It is not a formal confession

or

or prayer—It is not a present momentary amendment—It is not an ordinary though lasting re-
form that will meet the exigence of the occasion.
The times require great exertions. Every one
in his sphere and station must be active and zealous
to keep alive the spirit of religion, to extend
its influence and effects, to promote peace and
good-will on earth, and to incite one another by
example and persuasion so to live, that we may
continue to enjoy the distinguished *goodness* of
God towards us in this present world, and finally
be partakers together of an eternal inheritance in
heaven.

O that the inhabitants of the earth may at this
time, when God's judgments are upon them, or
every where around them, learn righteousness!
O that all states and all individuals in them may,
from the evils which they have suffered or
escaped, see the necessity and the value of reli-
gion! O that they may be wise! that they may
consider this! "*that they may see in this their day the
things which belong to their peace!*"